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ABSTRACT

This report is the result of a 10-month study of 12 principals in the School District of Philadelphia. The research included in the report is part of a body of qualitative data collected about schools engaged in Philadelphia's Children Achieving reform agenda. The report explores the nature of emerging responsibilities, the ways in which principals have interpreted their roles as instructional leaders in the face of new, inexorable, and increasingly public expectations regarding enhanced student achievement. The principals in the study represented elementary and middle schools from four parts of the city. The principals met as a group on 13 occasions for a total of more than 34 hours. In addition, each principal participated in two individual interviews and maintained journals. The study's findings resonate with those gathered through teacher and principal interviews as part of a larger, more comprehensive evaluation. The results suggest that when reforms confronted a pervasive and enduring legacy of bureaucracy, anonymity, and compliance, principals often felt they lacked organizational support for change. Caught between a public accountability system premised on universal excellence and the challenges of a culture of compliance, the principals described a new vulnerability, a sometimes-debilitating sense of accountability without authority. (Author/WFA)

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School Leadership and Reform: Case Studies of Philadelphia Principals

Occasional Paper

Mary Helen Spiri

May 2001

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ABOUT THE CHILDREN ACHIEVING CHALLENGE

In February 1995 shortly after the School Board of Philadelphia adopted *Children Achieving* as a systemic reform agenda to improve the Philadelphia public schools, the Annenberg Foundation designated Philadelphia as one of a few American cities to receive a five-year $50 million Annenberg Challenge grant to improve public education.

Among the conditions for receiving the grant was a requirement to raise two matching dollars ($100 million over five years) for each one received from the Annenberg Foundation and to create an independent management structure to provide program, fiscal, and evaluation oversight of the grant. In Philadelphia, a business organization, Greater Philadelphia First, assumed this responsibility, and with it, the challenge of building and sustaining civic support for the improvement of public education in the city.

Philadelphia's *Children Achieving* was a sweeping systemic reform initiative. Systemic reform eschews a school-by-school approach to reform and relies on coherent policy, improved coordination of resources and services, content and performance standards, decentralization of decision-making, and accountability mechanisms to transform entire school systems. Led by a dynamic superintendent and central office personnel, *Children Achieving* was the first attempt by an urban district to test systemic reform in practice.

EVALUATION OF CHILDREN ACHIEVING

In 1996 the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania and its partner, Research for Action (RFA) were charged by the *Children Achieving* Challenge with the evaluation of *Children Achieving*. Between the 1995-1996 and 2000-2001 school years, CPRE and RFA researchers interviewed hundreds of teachers, principals, parents, students, district officials, and civic leaders; sat in on meetings where the plan was designed, debated, and revised; observed its implementation in classrooms and schools; conducted two system-wide surveys of teachers; and carried out independent analyses of the District's test results and other indicators of system performance. A listing of the reports on *Children Achieving* currently available from CPRE is found below. There will be several additional reports released in the coming months. New reports will be listed and available as they are released on the CPRE web site at www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/.

CHILDREN ACHIEVING'S THEORY OF ACTION

To assess the progress and effects of a comprehensive reform such as *Children Achieving*, it is essential to understand its "theory of action," that is, the assumptions made about what actions or behaviors will produce the desired effects. A summary of the *Children Achieving* theory of action follows:

> *Given high academic standards and strong incentives to focus their efforts and resources; more control over school resource allocations, organization, policies, and programs; adequate funding and resources; more hands-on leadership and high-quality support; better coordination of resources and programs; schools restructured to support good teaching and encourage improvement of practice; rich professional development of their own choosing; and increased public understanding and support; the teachers and administrators of the Philadelphia schools will develop, adopt, or adapt instructional technologies and patterns of behavior that will help all children reach the District's high standards.*

ADDITIONAL READING ON CHILDREN ACHIEVING

The following publications on the evaluation of the *Children Achieving* are currently available through CPRE at (215) 573-0700.

- Recruiting and Retaining Teachers: Keys to Improving the Philadelphia Public Schools (May 2001)
- School Leadership and Reform: Case Studies of Philadelphia Principals (May 2001)

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Today, perhaps more than in any other era, the demands of the principalship pull school leaders in disparate, often contradictory, directions. Principals must juggle instructional, managerial, and political roles, making sense of new initiatives for change while mediating competing demands from the school, the district, and more recently, the state and nation.[1] School districts increasingly view principals as "site-based managers" responsible for acquiring and directing human and financial resources on behalf of their organizations,[2] while encouraging teachers and others to think deeply and creatively about their practice in order to foster "communities of learners."[3] Compounding this already complex set of demands is an expanded and public sense of accountability. Principals must perform their myriad tasks well to ensure that their schools "measure up" in a climate of heightened expectations, scrutiny, choice, and censure.[4]

It was within this national context that principals in the School District of Philadelphia were asked to adopt sweeping changes to their roles and responsibilities as part of the city's systemic reform initiative, *Children Achieving*. Launched in 1994 by then newly-appointed school Superintendent David Hornbeck, *Children Achieving* called for new organizational structures, new standards, new lines of authority, and new performance expectations for school leaders and teachers. The opening statement of the Action Design for the initiative acknowledged the challenges of systemic reform in a setting such as Philadelphia: "No city with any significant number and diversity of students has ever succeeded in having a large proportion of its young people succeed at high levels."[5]

One of most comprehensive features of this agenda for change was a new accountability system to measure progress on a school-by-school basis. As part of this process, the District established long-term goals and two-year targets for each school,

[1] L. Cuban, *The managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in schools*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988; T.J. Sergiovanni, *Leadership for the schoolhouse*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996; C. Abelmann and R.F. Elmore, *When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1999.

[2] P. Wohlstetter, "Getting school-based management right." In M. Fullan (Ed.), *The challenge of school change: A collection of articles* (pp. 181-190). Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight, 1997.

[3] D. Walker and L. Lambert, "Learning and leading theory: A century in the making." In L. Lambert, D. Walker, D.P. Zimmerman, J.E. Cooper, M.D. Lambert, M.E. Gardner, and P.J. Ford Slack (Eds.), *The constructivist leader* (pp. 1-27). New York: Teachers College Press, 1995; Sergiovanni, *Leadership for the schoolhouse*; L. Darling-Hammond, *The right to learn*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

[4] L. Olson, "Policy focus converges on leadership." *Education Week, XIX, 19* (pp. 1-7), January 12, 2000; Abelmann and Elmore, *When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?*

[5] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999*. Philadelphia: Author, Office of the Superintendent, 1995, p. i.

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reflecting data on student achievement, test scores, test participation, and faculty and student attendance. More significantly, the results of this new rating system, or "Performance Index," were made public for the first time. Suddenly, both the central administration and larger public had the means to gauge the progress of each individual school, in many cases before principals felt that they had fully understood or influenced the performances on which they were to be measured.

Some schools benefited early in the process from more intensive financial assistance and technical support as part of a cohort of newly grouped neighborhood schools, called "clusters," but the majority of principals were required to proceed with relatively little preparation or support. New organizational structures required principals to work more collaboratively with schools in their neighborhood feeder pattern, to divide their school into "small learning communities" (schools within schools), and to move beyond the Home and School Association to create new local school councils with elected representation by parents and staff. The District communicated some of these changes more fully and effectively prior to implementation than others. As new initiatives quickly followed one after another, many principals felt overwhelmed, frustrated, and angry.

This study represents an effort to learn more about how Philadelphia principals experienced this transition and what conclusions, if any, we can draw about the factors that helped or hindered their efforts to implement education reforms in the context of such a complex endeavor. Changes in District organization such as the creation of the clusters were intended to support principals in their new roles as public agents of school-by-school accountability. This study suggests, however, that when the new structures confronted a pervasive and enduring legacy of bureaucracy, anonymity, and compliance for those engaged in the work of school leadership, principals often felt that they lacked organizational support for change. Caught between a public accountability system premised on universal excellence and the challenges of a culture of compliance, the principals described a new vulnerability, a sometimes debilitating sense of accountability without authority.

This vulnerability — the realities faced by principals in all districts aggressively committed to school-by-school improvement in student achievement — is exacerbated by a setting such as the School District of Philadelphia, in which fiscal and human resources for educational change remain in short supply and must be carefully managed and directed. Philadelphia, the sixth largest school district in the nation, presents particular challenges of scale. The *Children Achieving* agenda, with its ambitious plan for systemic school reform, was designed to reverse years in which the progress, or lack of it, on the part of individual schools and principals was never fully quantified, measured, recognized, or made public.

This report does not assess principals' effectiveness as school leaders, nor critique the decisions they made or failed to make, but rather seeks to understand the factors that influenced their interpretation of their roles. The traditions and capacities

of those who are called upon to enact change are as important as policies and public commitments to change. As the focus of accountability in school districts shifts from the entire district to individual schools, the principal becomes less anonymous and increasingly more vulnerable. In cities such as Philadelphia, both the sheer size of the District and the complexity of its management structure compel principals to function as members of multiple cultures within and beyond their schools. Visibility and accountability may provide powerful motivation for change necessary to engage principals actively in improving their schools, but new expectations for principals do not eradicate the expectations of years gone by. To engage principals as active partners in the improvement process may require that districts do more than simply raise standards and increase accountability. Elmore[6] maintains that "school leaders are being asked to assume responsibilities they are largely unequipped to assume." This report, which describes the responses of principals to the *Children Achieving* agenda for change in the School District of Philadelphia, explores the tentative nature of these emerging responsibilities, the ways in which principals have interpreted their roles as instructional leaders in the face of new, inexorable, and increasingly public expectations regarding enhanced student achievement.

[6] R.F. Elmore, *Building a new structure for school leadership*. Washington, DC: The Albert Shanker Institute, 2000, p. 2.

HOW THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

This report is primarily the result of a ten-month collaboration with a study group of 12 principals in the School District of Philadelphia. The research included here is part of a body of qualitative data collected in and about schools engaged in Philadelphia's *Children Achieving* reform agenda, and its findings resonate with those gathered through teacher and principal interviews as part of a larger, more comprehensive evaluation by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. The principals in the study group represented elementary and middle schools from four parts of the city, each different in resources, clientele, and educational priorities. The 12 participants also differed in terms of their race, gender, age, level of administrative and other experience in the District, and perceived competence as leaders. While the sample was small, the author took care to select a group with a range of experience and skill that would provide an accurate reflection of the principals in the District overall. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the participants.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPAL STUDY GROUP

ID	Race	Cluster	Gender	Age	Years of Principal Experience	Years in School District	Perceived Competence
AA	W	1	F	48	7	25	Average
BB	B	1	F	43	3	16	Average
CC	W	1	M	52	11	27	Superior
DD	B	2	F	42	2	19	Average
EE	W	2	F	38	4	15	Superior
FF	B	2	M	57	17	33	Ineffective
GG	W	3	F	41	1	13	Superior
HH	B	3	M	44	3	22	Average
II	B	3	F	48	4	26	Superior
JJ	B	4	M	38	5	16	Superior
KK	W	4	F	46	2	23	Ineffective
LL	W	4	M	42	4	14	Ineffective

Notes: Perceived competence is an informal assessment based on personal observation and input from central level administrators who regularly work with principals. Throughout the report, principals are identified according to their respective ID.

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The principals met as a group on 13 occasions between March and December 1999 for a total of more than 34 hours. In addition, each principal participated in two individual interviews, one after the second meeting of the group and one at the end of the study group experience. Participants also maintained journals in which they responded to issues raised in the group meetings.

The study began as a District-initiated effort to engage a group of principals in participatory action research within their schools. Viewed as a potent, perhaps replicable form of professional development, participatory action research was defined as engaging principals in critical inquiry about teaching and learning in their own settings and developing their capacity to respond as leaders to their findings. This work reflected certain ambitious institutional goals: (1) to explore action research as a viable form of professional development for instructional leaders, (2) to generate school-level data about teaching and learning for presentation to the District's highest officials, and (3) to empower principals by permitting them to contribute their voices to other research voices instrumental in the *Children Achieving* reforms. One of the primary purposes of the work was to help principals recognize their own experiences and disciplined observations as data — to help them to understand that their own voices and interpretations had meaning.

The voices of principals that emerged were powerful in their commitment, but often powerless in their understanding of what was expected of them. As of this writing, only four of the original 12 principals in the sample group remain principals in the School District of Philadelphia. Their decisions to leave their roles, while individual and varied, reflect a universal sense of impotence in understanding or meeting the requirements of *Children Achieving*. The most senior participant among the group, who retired in July 2000, noted in his exit interview:

> *I've seen a lot of changes come and go. Mostly you can find your way through them, you know, find a way to make things work for your school. And you always have the children. I mean, they're a challenge and you can't help worrying about them, but you get to know their stories and you feel like you're doing some good. I'm not doing any good anymore. The stories aren't important to anyone anymore. I've always been good at the stories. I'm not good at the testing. I can't seem to get anyone to understand that the stories are more important than the testing. I can't get anyone to listen to me. I'm an old dog and I don't like the new tricks.*

Other principals expressed similar feelings of despair and frustration with the disparity between the perception of their role and the reality of their life in their schools. One of five principals who have accepted suburban principalships since the inception of the study group explained her decision in this way:

> *People assume it's about the money. I mean the money is nice, $12,000 more a year and no city wage tax. But I've been in Philadelphia for 23 years and I always assumed I'd retire from here. My kids went to school in Philadelphia. I*

> *got tired of hearing about how bad I was and how bad the District is overall...I got tired of having nothing to manage and then being told I must be a weak manager because my [Performance] Index was down. I'm used to living without the money. I won't live without the respect.*

Although the members of the study group came to the principalship through different experiences, believed that schools exist for different purposes, approached their roles as school leaders in different ways, and often chose to leave the District for different reasons, they shared a common sense of their perceived vulnerability as leaders and expressed it in equally strong and emotional language. As part of the early study group meetings, the principals described emphatically their refusal to be part of a participatory action research project through which they would publish findings for District officials. One principal defined his previous experience in sharing the challenges of his role in these words:

> *Anything I say in a meeting is an excuse. If I say I got no money and I got no books and I'm short eight teachers, it's an excuse. If I say my teachers won't do professional development, because they see no reason to, it's an excuse. You're asking us to stand up there and make excuses. No one will care. And it's our heads.*

Another suggested that participation in a public study was a form of exploitation:

> *You know what? You're setting us up. You're setting us up big and you don't even know it. Nothing matters but the Performance Index. They already know about the resource issues, and about the union, and about the clusters not doing anything to help us. None of it matters.*

An opportunity presented itself in this work with principals, not so much to illuminate teaching and learning practices in 12 schools, but rather to understand the ways in which the principals defined and enacted their roles as instructional leaders. More importantly, it provided the opportunity to understand how principals came to perceive the boundaries of authority that impeded or enhanced their work. While the role of principal is as idiosyncratic as it is predictable, areas of consensus emerged among the principals. The study group provided a forum in which principals could discuss deeply the reasons for the decisions they made or chose not to make. In some instances, principals simply lacked the capacity or information necessary to engage actively in *Children Achieving*'s new expectations. In others, they resisted change. In still other situations, the principals attempted to meet the District's heightened expectations of school-based decision-making and accountability, only to perceive that their risk-taking efforts made them still more vulnerable.

HOW *CHILDREN ACHIEVING* REDEFINED THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

Children Achieving provides a rich context for studying the emerging role of the principal. Formally adopted by the Philadelphia Board of Public Education in February of 1995, *Children Achieving* represents an ambitious plan for long-term systemic educational reform. The plan espouses ten key tenets toward its central goal: "all children can and will achieve at high levels."[7] It clearly defines and embraces expectations for accountability for student performance, structures for enhanced professional development to strengthen the skills of teachers, and adherence to a philosophy of site-based management, permitting those nearest the students to manage resources formerly managed at the District level. Central to *Children Achieving* is its emphasis on school-level responsibility for teaching and learning consistent with systemic reform efforts in general:

> *Much of the focus of systemic reform is on what happens in schools. It deals with higher standards for all children, more demanding curriculum content and instructional methodology, measurement systems for accountability, and organization for high performance. In short, it asks school personnel to attain higher standards, carry out their tasks differently, and organize differently to do so.*[8]

Embodied in *Children Achieving*'s tenets are expectations for sweeping structural changes in the organization of the District, changes intended in part to redefine relationships between central administration and schools. Under *Children Achieving,* offices in the central administration have been renamed, duties have been reassigned, and new offices have been created. At one time, the District consisted of as many as eight large regional or district offices with responsibility for about 30-40 schools each. Under *Children Achieving,* the District re-drew the map, replacing a system of regional offices with 22 smaller "clusters," each consisting of a comprehensive high school and its feeder pattern of elementary and middle schools. These changes were designed to support the stated goal to "shrink the centralized bureaucracy and let schools make more decisions":

> *Professionals who a[illegible]pected to produce results and be judged on those results should have t[illegible]ght to determine how they practice their profession. Thus, significant authority to determine the nature of the school learning environment will move down the bureaucratic pipeline so that those closer to the students make more of the decisions that shape instruction...In this new scenario, schools will make the important decisions around teaching and*

[7] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999*, p. i.

[8] S.A. Mohrman and E.E. Lawler III, "Motivation for school reform." In S.H. Fuhrman and J.A. O'Day (Eds.), *Rewards and reform: Creating educational incentives that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, p. 115.

> *learning, and the central office will set standards, assess progress, monitor for equity, and act as a guide and provider of resources and support.*[9]

The *Children Achieving* agenda positioned the performance of principals and their schools prominently in the public eye, creating both opportunity and scrutiny for school leaders as never before from central and cluster-level administrators, parents, and the larger public.

Not only were principals now expected to act with greater autonomy and assume greater responsibility at the school level for a range of decisions and choices, they were also expected to coordinate their curriculum with other schools within the feeder pattern to ensure more effective transitions as students progressed through the continuum. Addressing this lack of coordination between schools was a primary rationale for the cluster structure, as the Action Design states:

> *Many of the educational and social problems that plague Philadelphia and other urban districts can be traced directly to a segmented education path filled with jarring transitions...By creating an organization that allows for planning and decision-making around the entire period of a child's education, we can create the type of comprehensive, systemic, and deep-rooted changes that will raise achievement for all children.*[10]

Such statements shaped the work of principals in two important ways. First, as school leaders, principals were expected and required to facilitate a greater number of school-level decisions regarding teaching and learning in their respective buildings. Under such circumstances, the role of the principal is not simply to implement and measure the effectiveness of decisions made elsewhere, but rather to guide a faculty toward good decisions and seek out support to ensure they can be enacted. Second, principals must somehow "articulate" decisions made at each school with decisions made at other schools, so that students experience a coherent educational path from enrollment to graduation. The principal is thus called upon to act as an educational leader within two communities: that of the school and that of the cluster or district. Working as a facilitator of decisions within the school and as a coordinator of such decisions beyond the school requires particular skills.

Importantly, these new roles and leadership skills were implied rather than explicitly stated. *Children Achieving* speaks directly to the role of the principal in the District only once, as part of the third component of the Action Design, "Local Decision-making." Interestingly, this description appears under "Strategy 2: Establish school councils with governance over school-wide policies and resources":

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[9] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999*, pp. iii-iv.

[10] Ibid.

> *The activities of each school will be coordinated and facilitated by a principal who will be responsible for providing leadership of the school. He/she will be responsible for implementation of the educational directions established by the school council, for implementation of the school council's policies on shared resources, for developing grants, and for public engagement with the school's community. The principal is the legal rating agent for state-mandated ratings of individual teachers and staff.*[11]

Throughout the remainder of this report, discussion of the roles and structures of teaching and learning focuses on the classroom teacher, parents, students, and District and cluster support staff. As in other reform initiatives, the role of the principal in plans for change has been largely overlooked and underspecified.[12]

While the *Children Achieving* design does not directly address the functions or attributes of the successful or effective principal, it provides a clear system of school-level accountability premised on measures of student achievement gains. The District's Performance Index is used to set targets for individual school improvement in two-year cycles based on the 12-year district goal of 90 percent of students across the city achieving at the highest levels of excellence. Within that timeframe, schools are expected to attain two targets in each two-year accountability cycle. The first of these is specific improvement on an overall index score derived in large part from measures of student performance in reading, mathematics, and science on the Stanford Tests of Achievement, 9th Edition (SAT-9). The scaled score for each school also includes measures of student attendance, staff attendance, student promotion and retention in grade, and, in the high school, persistence or dropout rates for students. The second two-year target requires schools to reduce the numbers of students scoring in the "Below Basic" category on the SAT-9 by 10 percent. Schools must show gains against a baseline of achievement in their own settings and not, ostensibly, through competition with each other.

The principal's responsibility for influencing his or her school's performance within this accountability system, while not explicitly stated, is nonetheless clear. Performance Index results constitute public records of school achievement and yield particular rewards and consequences for members of school communities. In keeping with Hanushek's[13] contention that "flexibility in the means of education must be balanced by absolute clarity regarding the desired ends," the Performance Index provides non-negotiable measures of school success or failure. To these measures accrue rewards, such as financial incentives for exceeding target goals, and consequences, such as mandatory participation in the District's School Support Process for schools that fail to meet their two-year targets. Hanushek maintains:

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[11] Ibid, pp. iii-4.

[12] Olson, "Policy focus converges on leadership."

[13] E.A. Hanushek, *Making schools work: Improving performance and controlling costs*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994, p. 88

> *The effectiveness of an incentive system depends directly on how individuals act when faced with a given pattern of rewards. So rewards and punishments must be sufficient to get people to change their behavior, and they must be precise in their effect. Impact and effectiveness flow from the details.*[14]

The Performance Index has provided a powerful incentive system for principals, because of the rewards and consequences created and imposed by the District and the public nature of disclosures about school achievement. As a result of clear and universal expectations for school success, principals are expected to encourage and equip teachers and students to work toward particular, measurable learning goals. For the 12 principals in the study group, the Performance Index was the only universally understood component of the *Children Achieving* agenda.

The *Children Achieving* Action Design makes note, to some extent, of the challenges inherent in reaching the goals embodied in the Performance Index through its emphasis on professional development. Originally, the Design called for "20 days of time or its budgetary equivalent for the professional development of all school-based teachers, administrators, and staff"[15] and for the development of a cluster-based Teaching and Learning Network "to help staff identify, observe, practice, and receive feedback on good teaching and learning practices, and serve as a resource for curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies."[16] Within the plan, professional development was to be "located within the learning community and school, providing brokering and support from the clusters and central office."[17] While the 20 days of professional development never materialized in negotiated teacher or principal contracts, an expectation that teachers and principals would become more skilled at helping students to reach higher standards became embedded in the *Children Achieving* rhetoric.

This school-based approach to professional development created another implied responsibility for principals. Within this professional development structure and the inexorable presence of the Performance Index, principals were expected to create opportunities for school-based learning in support of the reform philosophy that "to provide excellent teaching on a widespread basis, the schools must promote commitment to high ideals and the opportunity to become increasingly skillful in the craft of teaching."[18] The possibility of increased time for professional development and the presence of the Teaching and Learning Network ultimately created, perhaps, additional resources for professional development, but the individual responsible for

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[14] Ibid, p. 90.

[15] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999*, p. v.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] G. Sykes, "Fostering teacher professionalism in schools." In R.F. Elmore (Ed.), *Restructuring schools: The next generation of educational reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, p. 84.

using such new resources effectively was the principal. Within their understandings of the reform agenda, enhancing the skills of teachers was a means only to the end of increasing their schools' Performance Index scores. In other words, principals recognized that the ultimate and only institutional measure of the quality of professional development in their schools was achievement on the Performance Index.

In contrast to the tacit expectations for leadership described previously, the role of the principal in *Children Achieving*'s espoused theory of site-based management is clearly stated in the plan's design, as noted above: "He/she will be responsible for implementation of the educational directions established by the school council, for implementation of the school council's policies on shared resources, for developing grants, and for public engagement with the school's community."[19] This statement is not especially empowering, suggesting that the principal under *Children Achieving* is responsible for implementation rather than transformation within his or her school community, acting merely at the pleasure of the local school council. The 12 principals in this study often described what they perceived to be conflicting expectations regarding their roles as leaders while at the same time being held accountable for their students' achievement. They believed that they lacked the authority within this description of their roles to enact or facilitate instructional or organizational change. One noted, "On Tuesday I have to evaluate a teacher and then on Wednesday at the Council meeting she tells me what to do. I have no clue who's in charge." Increased visibility and responsibility, and hence vulnerability, was not balanced with increased power or autonomy to lead.

The *Children Achieving* Action Design created new implied responsibilities for principals: influencing student and teacher achievement on the Performance Index, creating a rich community for learning through professional development and shared leadership, and coordinating the work of the school with the work of other neighborhood schools. The Design also prescribed the manner in which these tasks must be accomplished: through implementation of the decisions of a local school council. Under the loosely-defined umbrella of site-based management, the District left the task of meeting new responsibilities to the principals themselves, assuming without input from the principals that new structures and policies supported their work. The remainder of this report explores the ways in which the principals interpreted and operationalized instructional leadership and District support for such leadership.

[19] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999*, pp. iii-4.

PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

BROAD DEFINITIONS

Among the principals in the study group, instructional leadership represented a loosely defined set of activities within the tacit framework of expectations embodied in *Children Achieving*. Not surprisingly, given current emphasis on instructional leadership in school administration literature, all of the principals were quick to characterize themselves as instructional leaders within their buildings. Asked in September 1999 to generate a list of activities representative of their work as principals, they offered:

- Meeting with parents;
- Student discipline;
- Meeting with the cluster office;
- Special meetings downtown;
- Meeting with teachers in groups (Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Building Committee, faculty, SLC);
- Visiting classrooms of new teachers;
- MBWA ("management by walking around");
- Checking on materials not received;
- Checking on staff not received;
- Meeting with people from outside agencies (mental health, social services);
- Returning phone calls; and
- Paperwork from cluster and downtown.

The majority of the principals attested that, of the above list, student discipline, meeting with teachers in groups, visiting classrooms of new teachers, MBWA, checking on staff not received, and paperwork from cluster and downtown constituted instructional leadership. Two of the principals argued that every item on the list is a form of instructional leadership:

> *Everything I do is about instructional leadership, because a school is about instruction. I don't see any difference between being a manager and being an instructional leader. I don't see how you can be a principal and not be an instructional leader.*
>
> *I was trained to be an instructional leader and I am.*

Two others, however, expressed concern that the list of principal activities depicted minimal instructional leadership:

This list is frightening. It looks like I'm not doing any instructional leadership at all. What a wonderful example to set for my staff at the beginning of the school year. When I start in classrooms in October, I really get down to it.

I try to set the tone at the beginning of the year, check in on people especially my new people. But BB is right. I'm still finding staff and materials when the students come back. That first couple of weeks is about nervous parents, making sure we have IEP's [Individualized Education Plans] for the special ed. students, records from other schools. I run around managing the paper.

Despite these objections to the group's list of instructional leadership activities, it is significant that all of the principals defined instructional leadership not in terms of outcomes for teaching and learning, but rather in terms of activities in which they engaged. Further, none mentioned supervision, observation, or coaching as part of instructional leadership, although one referenced "starting in classrooms in October" as beginning the real work of instructional leadership.

The principals were unanimous in their assertions that they functioned as instructional leaders within their schools. This level of confidence was closely related to the principals' broad definitions of instructional leadership, in which many perceive that most of the work they perform is somehow related to instruction. Within this expansive framework, all of their activities touched on instruction, perhaps rendering it unnecessary to engage in other activities more consistent with what the literature defines as instructional leadership. Absent from the principals' discussions were any references to specific goals and activities through which they could assess their effectiveness as instructional leaders. In other words, the principals seemed to have embraced a broad and vague notion of instructional leadership. They perceived that they had been trained to provide such leadership, and therefore they did — without defining what such leadership looks like and what results it might yield. They assumed that, in terms of personal efficacy, they were effective instructional leaders.

PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

In describing areas in which they felt that their performance as instructional leaders was limited or deficient, the principals cited environmental factors that undermined their performance, rather than their personal attributes as leaders. One area in which principals felt themselves to be deficient was professional development of staff, an area that Darling-Hammond,[20] Elmore and Burney,[21] and others note is essential to instructional improvement. Importantly, when asked whether they

[20] Darling-Hammond, The right to learn.

[21] R.F. Elmore and D. Burney, *Investing in teacher learning: Staff development and improvement in Community District #2, New York City*. New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1997.

believed that they provided effective professional development for teachers and others within their schools, five of the seven principals who participated in the discussion clearly described professional development as the responsibility of the District or cluster, and not of individual school leaders. In essence, they absolved themselves from the responsibility of coordinating professional development at the school level:

> *We have a whole network who does this. They do the summer stuff and they're supposed to come into the schools. They answer to somebody else, not to me. They're on the payroll and it's their job to teach teachers the new stuff they need to know.*
>
> *My cluster tells me what to do in professional development. I schedule the workshops for the teachers, based on who the cluster tells me to use. We have good facilitators in our cluster and they like to do the after-school workshops. I'd say five or six of my staff [of 28 teachers] attend.*
>
> *My understanding is that the network and USI provide this. I pay teachers to attend whatever they want to attend that the District offers.*
>
> *In my cluster, we have to use the facilitators unless we find someone else free from the District, and then the person in charge of the facilitators has to approve that. You remember when you came in? It's more trouble than it's worth, so I leave it up to the cluster.*

These five principals viewed the existence of the District's Teaching and Learning Network (TLN) and Urban Systemic Initiative (USI) — entities created under *Children Achieving* and sharing responsibility within the District for providing professional development for teachers — as evidence that the District and cluster had accepted or assumed responsibility for professional development. The two structures function in different ways: each cluster includes a Teaching and Learning Network Coordinator and a number of facilitators — credentialed teachers who must pass a test in their area of expertise and subject themselves to a selection process — managed by a director at the District level. The TLN is responsible for professional development in general "constructivist" teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning, and to a lesser degree for encouraging innovation in specific subject disciplines through intensive programs during District-sponsored "Summer Content Institutes." The Urban Systemic Initiative is managed by a District-level director and three teachers on "special assignment." This organization trains lead teachers in the areas of science, mathematics, and technology, working to maintain a corps of at least two such lead teachers in every school. The TLN is thus viewed as a cluster entity — facilitators work within their appointed clusters and not across clusters — while USI is a centrally managed, school-based initiative.

That the majority of principals viewed professional development as outside their realm of responsibility is but part of the finding. The second significant finding is the manner in which principals defined professional development. Among the principals quoted above, professional development meant only attendance at workshops or training sessions. Participation in critical groups or networks such as those described by Cochran-Smith and Lytle[22] or Lieberman[23] was not considered a form of professional development. These principals did not believe themselves responsible for the development of teacher leaders[24] within their schools. They defined meeting time for teachers not as an opportunity to encourage instructional dialogue among teachers, but rather as an administrative consideration "necessary to get through the Comprehensive Student Support Process," or "twice a month for each Small Learning Community."

GG and BB voiced exceptions to this belief. While neither clearly articulated how a teacher would function as an instructional leader within a school, both recognized the sharing of experiences related to learning as essential to teacher growth. BB, in describing the mentor program in place at her school, stated:

> *I have a total of two teachers on my staff who've been officially trained as mentors, which might make some sense given that I get so few new teachers. But I do have a lot of retirements and transfers. So I pair up all of my teachers, kind of like critical friends, and they work together all year. Like I pair a veteran second grade teacher with someone new in first grade or third grade and they coordinate their teaching, or I pair up people in the higher grades who have the same subjects in their roster. I count their talk time as their ten hours every year.*

When pressed by other group members how she maintained accurate records of this "talk time," BB responded:

> *I made up a form that they're supposed to fill in and I stick it in a file in the office in case anyone asks. Do some of them blow off the time or make up the forms? Sure. But those who really do it get more value out of it than most of the workshops I used to schedule.*

GG described her efforts as a second-year principal of a school with considerable teacher turnover to provide support for new staff:

> *I have nine new teachers this year and some of them aren't very good. We have meetings, them and me, twice a month for breakfast in my office...and I try to*

[22] M. Cochran-Smith and S. Lytle (Eds.), *Inside/Outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1993.

[23] A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Schools as collaborative cultures: Creating the future now*. New York: Falmer Press, 1990.

[24] Sykes, "Fostering teacher professionalism in schools;" R.F. Elmore, "Introduction: On changing the structure of public schools." In R.F. Elmore (Ed.), *Restructuring schools: The next generation of educational reform* (pp. 1-28). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990

see them in their classrooms. I pair them with mentors, but the mentor job description is fairly vague and I'm not sure that all of them get the support they need. I also try to get them to attend the District offerings, balanced early literacy and all of that, inviting them personally.

When asked by BB whether she used veteran staff in assisting new hires, GG responded:

I inherited this sort of interesting culture. I have a tough Building Rep [a ranking school representative of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers] who discourages teachers from meeting unless I compensate them, and I have limited funding to do that. It can't happen during the school day because I seldom can find substitutes when teachers are absent, so my staff have coverages...and there's this mentor role, as defined downtown. It doesn't matter if the people trained to be mentors are the ones I would select to be with new staff. Once they've had the training I have to use them. Quite frankly, some of my weakest teachers with the worst habits are trained mentors.

GG, like the other members of the group, referenced the TLN coordinator and facilitators at the cluster level as her primary professional development resources. Unlike the other members of the group, however, she bristled at restrictions she perceived the presence of the TLN placed upon her as an instructional leader, echoing to a degree another principal's assertion that seeking professional development providers from beyond the cluster "is not worth the trouble":

They've created this monopoly. I mean, I would love to bring in some other people I've met, like from my graduate program or in other workshops in the District. I'd love to bring in the Philadelphia Writing Project people from Penn... but it creates this horrible envy thing. The cluster facilitators come and they're critical, and they ask, 'Why did you pay for this, when I can do it as well?' I thought that what site-based management said is that my school should make the choices. But if I use someone from outside the network long-term and my [Performance] Index falls, I'm dead in the water. I can get away with the occasional quick workshop, what you call "drive-by professional development" from outside, but anything sustainable, I have to go to the TLN, whether I respect their work or not.

BB voiced a similar sentiment: "I think workshops get the information in people, and then I have to make certain it's applied somewhere. Judging from what I see in classrooms after the workshops, I'm not sure of the quality of the workshops my teachers have exposure to in the District..."

The disparate views presented here converge in their implications for effective instructional leadership. The first view is that the District and cluster have created

professional development structures that have moved responsibility for professional development beyond the school, thus absolving principals from this responsibility. The second is the view that these external structures impede principals' capacity to provide the best professional development experiences for their staffs, irrespective of their professional commitment to such experiences. The perceived existence of limitations regarding the selection and provision of professional development shaped these principals' "beliefs about the controllability of the environment"[25] which might inform their willingness to exert effort in this area. Despite their assertions that they were instructional leaders, and their acceptance of professional development as intrinsic to instructional leadership, they were passive in designing coherent professional development experiences for their staffs. Further, they took no responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the training provided by the Teaching and Learning Network or the Urban Systemic Initiative.

This passivity could, as Elmore[26] suggests, reflect a lack of understanding about professional development, a capacity deficit on the part of the principals. Another possibility is that the principals simply resisted what they saw as an added responsibility for redefining and encouraging quality professional development. A third hypothesis, and one seldom explored in the literature, is that these principals have learned to behave passively through previous experience with failed attempts to engage in leadership around professional development. They have worked for a long time in a "compliance" culture that does not reward initiative and have perhaps developed a form of trained incompetence. Such trained incompetence or "learned helplessness"[27] might suggest ways in which *Children Achieving* unintentionally disempowered school leaders, reinforcing a culture in which initiative was discouraged despite the rhetoric of site-based management.

Three participants provided detailed examples of the kinds of experiences that might have contributed to their perceptions of lack of control or contingency between efforts and outcomes. These examples speak to issues of professional development, but also suggest broader implications for principals' roles as instructional leaders in their schools. HH spoke about his efforts to engage the interest and support of his teachers in a comprehensive reform model presented by representatives from an area university:

> *I brought these people in to three or four meetings, got my whole staff to stay after school, sent these people to SLC meetings and all of that. I mean, I did research and looked at the internet, lots of time. The teachers really liked their package — parent involvement was in there, some math and science materials,*

[25] M. Mikulincer, *Human learned helplessness: A coping perspective*. New York: Plenum Press, 1994.

[26] Elmore, *Building a new structure for school leadership*.

[27] C. Peterson, S.F. Maier, and M.E.P. Seligman, *Learned helplessness: A theory for the age of personal control*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

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lots of professional development. I sent seven teachers to look at this model in schools in New Jersey...It was the first time I got the whole staff talking about how our school could be better. And then I got this call from the cluster telling me that someone downtown didn't like one of the people associated with this model and we had to give it up and pick another model. And we had like three days to pick another model. The cluster told me which model they liked and we went for it. We have this model supposedly, but I'm not knocking myself out making it work.

HH described further how this series of events impacted his standing within his school:

You know what? I felt like an idiot having to tell my teachers that none of this work mattered to anyone. I mean, they said, 'Hey, you know Philadelphia, you really tried' and stuff like that, so I knew they didn't really think it was my fault, but I felt like I could really have done something positive, brought the teachers on board in a good way. Obviously my work didn't matter to anyone...if they knew what model they wanted me to pick, they should just have told me to get it and not set me up to do this work and end up looking impotent for my staff.

This emotional description illustrates how, for HH, the principalship is perched precariously between school and District. Rationally or not, HH now limits his professional development responsibilities to three activities: (1) advertising cluster and District offerings to his staff, (2) scheduling a two-hour workshop by a cluster facilitator on each of the District Instructional Review days, and (3) monitoring Title I expenditures toward compensation of teachers for attendance at workshops beyond the contract day. In defining his responsibility to provide professional development opportunities for his staff, he asserted, "I learned my lesson. I leave it to the cluster like they want."

LL, who established himself previously as one of the participants who believes that all of the work of the principalship represents instructional leadership, described for the group in November his experience with the School Support Process for schools that fail to meet their performance targets. In his first full year as principal, LL's school was targeted for District attention as a result of declining results on the Performance Index. He described his efforts to improve his school's performance:

I looked at the data, but I didn't really know what it said. I mean, obviously, we were in the basement, but I didn't know how to use the data to make it better. So I brought in a couple of people from Penn, volunteers who were working at another school and the principal there said they were good and everything. That's when the trouble started. My cluster leader read me the riot act. 'Why am I going outside the cluster? All of the facilitators can help me.' Anyway, I decided to use some of my Title I money to hire a consultant, one of these people from Penn who was willing to be in classrooms and everything, do

workshops. The Cluster Leader wouldn't approve it. The cluster came up with a plan and one of the facilitators was assigned to my building three times a week and she did workshops after school on Thursdays. Most of my teachers wouldn't go, and I got reprimanded for that, a letter and everything, even though I said all along that the teachers didn't want to work with this facilitator. So I said screw it, I went with the cluster plan, the scores came up and it's over now.

In describing his own plan for improvement, LL touched again on the principals' often-voiced sensitivity about the Performance Index as the "only goddamn measure of our usefulness to the District."[28] He goes on to say:

You know what? My school sucks. Everybody in the District knows it sucks. I can't get teachers to come here or stay here because everyone knows it sucks...So I thought I would maybe use this School Support stuff to get at the real problem, this history of "sucks." I wanted to have little group meetings and get people's opinions, you know, parents and teachers, how come it sucks and what we can do about it. I wanted to do a big thing, really change it, and I think this person from Penn could have pulled it off, the teachers liked her. But my Cluster Leader said out loud, 'You don't have time to fix your school. You got to get your test scores up.' And this facilitator did nothing but test prep every Thursday, and we got all the test prep materials and the scores went up. Now I just focus on the test. I keep my Index where it needs to be.

Asked by another member of the group if this attention to the Performance Index helped to improve his school, LL laughed and said, "Go around this table and ask everyone which schools in the District suck, and see if mine isn't one of them." It was. Asked how he now approached professional development, he said:

Like HH, I schedule something on the required days and post the advertisements about all the offerings...I know I need to do more, but I don't make time, since the cluster makes the rules anyhow.

LL, like HH, voiced frustration at the cluster's authority over the professional development of his staff. Significantly, at the initiation of the School Support Process, he was willing to risk energy and resources to develop a professional development program which would have engaged teachers in both workshops and professional dialogue — the kinds of activities suggested by Lieberman and others as essential to the "professionalization of teachers."[29] He was prepared to engage in a genuine program of school improvement, recognizing that the reputation of his school creates a recurring cycle of staff vacancies and resultant poor instruction. As principal, he proposed a demanding instructional leadership task for himself within his school community. Following his experience with the School Support Process, he redefined

[28] AA, November, 1999.

[29] Sykes, "Fostering teacher professionalism in schools."

his role as a provider of professional development, "In my cluster, we have to use the facilitators, unless we find someone else free from the District, and then the person in charge of the facilitators has to approve that. It's more trouble than it's worth, so I leave it up to the cluster. They tell me what to do and I do it."

LL, like HH, was influenced by a negative experience that impacted his motivation to provide the kinds of professional development opportunities for his staff that he believed would improve the public image and effectiveness of his school. If learned helplessness resulted inexorably from a single instance of situational uncontrollability, however, all of the principals in the study would be helpless. Learned helplessness occurs when individuals transfer perceived lack of control to new situations, based on their beliefs about their personal capacity to perform actions which will yield desired outcomes or beliefs about the responsiveness of the environment to their actions.[30] In order for LL to behave helplessly in providing innovative professional development opportunities to his staff, he had to come to believe that the experience he described was typical of the milieu in which he works — that it represented a set of conditions that generally rendered him powerless.

BB described her efforts to establish a partnership with a local university through which university staff would provide professional development during the school day, while teachers-in-training from the university would serve as substitute teachers to accommodate the release of her teachers to engage in the workshops:

> *It took me three months starting last April, phone calls back and forth, meeting there and meeting here to come up with this plan. I wanted to focus on literacy across the curriculum. I tied it to the SAT-9, the open-ended question stuff, I wrote up this big description for the cluster and I got the go-ahead. So then it came down to needing child abuse clearances for the kids who would be subs. So they all applied for those. And then it came down to how do we pay them as subs? And I said we don't have to pay them because they get course credit for this work. And then it came down that they're not certified subs. Let's get real. Half the teachers we hire aren't certified. So by this time it's January and I haven't started yet, the college kids all changed semesters and moved onto another course, so the college has to recruit a new bunch. So I talked to the cluster leader and said I need some help with downtown, making this happen. Could I use a facilitator to help? And she said, 'No, you have to do this on your own,' and 'where is such-and-such a report?' So I tried to meet with Human Resources, where the slow-down was, and they told me they were going into recruiting season and there wasn't anyone available to help, and then I gave it up. Then I tried something else with workshops after school, but of course my teachers are at the top of the scale and they won't stay after for the pay...and so I bagged it.*

[30] Mikulincer, Human learned helplessness.

Asked about repercussions in her building following this experience, BB stated:

> *I feel like I lost a lot of face with my staff, getting them all revved up and then not being able to make it happen. When you have a staff as veteran as mine, getting any kind of creativity is a real problem. Most of my teachers are pretty sound traditional types. What I think they learned is that creativity doesn't get supported. I wanted to do something innovative and the District wouldn't let it happen. So now when I suggest that we do something differently some people know that it might not work. Some people seem to enjoy that.*

In response to an interview question about continuing to innovate, BB responded:

> *I have to pick my battles more carefully. I've pretty much left professional development alone. I focus on other things like my mentor program that I had going before all this happened. I have to say it's hard to make things happen without the help of the cluster or the District. Sometimes I know that my wanting something to happen isn't enough to make it happen. I never felt that way before.*

While the professional development of staff is a responsibility for principals within their schools, it is a task that requires communication and support from others outside of the schools. Throughout the study group experience, and as depicted in the examples offered by three of the principals, what frustrated principals was not the added responsibility of professional development, but rather their perceived lack of authority to function as site-based managers within cluster and District organizations. The principals spoke passionately about their perceived impotence in certain areas that impacted their performance, such as professional development. Their frustration centered most often in a perceived gap between *Children Achieving*'s espoused theory of site-based management — funneling as many resources as possible to the schools and creating networks of support which schools could choose to tap to support their goals — and the School District of Philadelphia's theory-in-use, which required that the principals secure permission for their decisions regarding the use of their resources. One principal succinctly defined frustration at the gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use:

> *They can't have it both ways. They can't say, 'You are responsible for the Performance Index and you have to spend your money to raise scores' and then 'Do it this way.' Whoever makes the decision ought to be accountable. My decision, my head. Their decision, their head.*

ACQUISITION OF RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Another set of activities which all of the principals believed essential to effective instructional leadership was the acquisition of material and human resources to support teaching and learning. Limited fiscal resources were part of the enduring

culture of Philadelphia in the perspectives of the principals. In fact, the principals expressed a certain collective pride in "making do" under difficult conditions:

> *There's something almost noble about what we do, you know? Making good stuff happen for kids when everyone knows how hard it is with what we have.*
>
> *People on the outside may say that the District has a lot of waste and I'm not sure I could argue with them. But when teachers in the District succeed, they know they're good teachers. They do it with only strength of will and motivation. They don't have an easy time with all the materials at hand. They have what they need and they make do with that, no extras. I'm proud of what some of them manage to do.*

Perhaps surprisingly, the only principals who consistently complained that they lacked financial resources necessary to achieve excellence were two who worked in relatively affluent communities in the northeast section of the city and therefore received minimal Title I support. The others, while occasionally mentioning items or resources they would purchase if they had more money at their disposal, maintained that, with Title I funding, they were able to implement reasonable instructional programs. This acceptance of available resources speaks to principals' vision of quality, their expectations of excellence, and their understanding of what it takes to improve instruction and to serve their students. The recurring issue of resource limitation evolved not as a discussion of limited means, but rather as an issue of limited control over means.

The prevailing view that ample resources existed to provide effective instruction could be related to the finding that principals viewed themselves as instructional leaders without defining what instructional leadership means. Despite numerous efforts to engage the principals in discussions of "effective" instruction, none would describe at length what constitutes such instruction. Effective instruction proved a difficult topic to discuss. Yet, universally, the principals recognized that encouraging effective instruction was part of their roles as instructional leaders:

> *I have to work everyday to make sure my teachers are doing what they need to be doing for students.*
>
> *I have to keep the teachers focused on using time well, so the kids get as much as they can out of it.*
>
> *Moving from traditional to constructivist teaching is difficult, even for the newer teachers who have been more recently trained. I often have to offer advice about different ways to teach familiar content.*

However, when pressed to describe effective instruction, only GG offered concrete examples of effective teaching practice.

It is possible that the culture of the School District of Philadelphia, in which the principals have learned to define their roles, is not a culture in which understanding instruction has been a priority. Rather, principals have perhaps focused on management and compliance with District directives. This possibility is not a surprising one: Elmore and Burney[31] discovered recently in District 2 in New York that engaging principals in discussions of student learning was a challenging task. Tyack and Hansot[32] assert that principals through time have proven adept at readily sidestepping the instructional leadership imperative: "Public school leaders in the past have mostly been able to absorb demands for change by accretion without changing much the central core of instruction." Certainly it will prove difficult to "change the central core of instruction" when the principals avoid discussion of the topic.

A second and related hypothesis for the principals' reticence or inability to discuss instruction is that what is discussed under *Children Achieving* is assessment, specifically the Performance Index, and not instruction: "Redesign teaching and learning so that the *who, how, where,* and *when* are viewed as the variables and *student achievement* remains the constant" [emphasis in original].[33] The rhetoric of *Children Achieving* and of systemic reform efforts nationwide have embraced increased student achievement as the goal of change. Improved instruction is assumed under terms such as "research-based practice,"[34] but is not clearly defined beyond attention to the instruments that will measure instruction. For the principals in the study, a clear connection between changes in instructional practice and enhanced student achievement outcomes was noticeably lacking. For the majority of the principals — the exceptions in this instance as in previous examples being GG and BB — the District's Performance Index necessitated more careful attention to the assessment process, but not to instruction in general.

When asked directly, "What instructional changes have you encouraged in your schools under *Children Achieving*?" the principals responded:

> *I've built a math prep class into my rotation schedule instead of music. I purchased all the Key Links [a commercial test preparation package tied to the SAT-9], so all my students get some practice with the items before the test.*
>
> *All of my classroom teachers have Key Links.*
>
> *We do a problem-of-the-day in math and science to get ready for the open-ended questions.*

[31] Elmore and Burney, *Investing in teacher learning.*

[32] D.B. Tyack and E. Hansot, *Managers of virtue: Public school leadership in America, 1820-1980.* New York: Basic Books, 1982, p. 252.

[33] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999,* pp. ix-10.

[34] School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving action design 1995-1999.*

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We use the test prep materials for a full month before the test in all the classes in all the tested grade levels.

I brought in a retired teacher who works with kids we pull out [of class] three days a week. This person has all the test prep stuff and the kids are really ready for the SAT-9.

For these principals, instructional changes imply only better preparation for the administration of the SAT-9, not changes in the ways in which teachers and learners interact. That they clearly recognize and eagerly attack their responsibility to meet the biennial goals of the Performance Index is clear. It is less clear that they view this responsibility as an opportunity or requirement to improve classroom instruction beyond direct preparation for the test employed by the District. In essence, improving instruction by raising test scores represents a new form of compliance rather than innovation, response to a District directive rather than an opportunity to engage in fundamental change.

Their limited perspectives on the role of enhanced instruction in improving student performance might account for their assertions that they commanded ample financial resources to achieve excellence. Their budgets permitted the acquisition of test preparation materials, which they saw as evidence of instructional improvement. As site-based managers, they were permitted to make staffing decisions previously not allowed, for example eliminating a librarian and hiring a teacher to provide additional math instruction. As long as they limited these decisions to providing better test preparation, they felt that the resources at their disposal were adequate. In the management of school-based financial resources, within their understanding of effective instructional programs, the principals did not behave passively or helplessly. They interpreted their role in the management of resources as limited to careful preparation for the SAT-9 and believed that they were proactive in meeting this responsibility:

I look at what I have in my budget and I make sure all my classrooms have textbooks good for the SAT-9. Then I have that extra pull-out program with the retired teacher. My teachers have everything they need to do the job.

The [TLN] facilitators tell me what to buy to make sure most students are ready for the test and I buy it. They train the teachers how to use it. My scores have been getting better every year.

Given their interpretations of instructional improvement and their understanding of how the School District was defining it — providing resources for test preparation — all but one of the principals felt empowered to manage adequate financial resources.

GG provided an important exception, and an example of the definitive and pervasive nature of the School District's culture. Although she did not voice clear statements about the meaning of "effective instruction," and although she maintained throughout the eight months of the study that her school budget and opportunities to pursue additional sources of funding permitted her to purchase ample materials for instruction, she did voice concerns about the lack of basic classroom tools, supplies, and resources that make instructional improvement possible. In a journal entry in September, she wrote:

> *When I was teaching in Pittsburgh, there were things we took for granted. Every classroom had an overhead projector. It sounds like a stupid thing, but how can you teach kids to edit their writing if you can't put up examples so all the kids learn? And we had as much Xerox as we needed. My teachers pay to copy their stuff or they don't copy at all and have kids copying stuff off the board which is not good use of their time. The classrooms don't have maps or globes or closets that lock. You know, when a teacher leaves, the faculty circle like piranha and they strip the room clean. The desk goes, the bookcases, the file cabinets, anything that isn't nailed to the wall. The new teacher who moves in starts with absolutely nothing.*

When GG shared this writing with the other participants, her point to the group was that "Philadelphia is different than other places in terms of resources. Teachers in other places take certain materials and resources for granted." The reaction of the group members, none of whom had worked as an educator in a district other than Philadelphia, illuminated the pervasiveness of District culture:

> *You know, I could put an overhead in every room but the teachers wouldn't know what to do with them. And then they'd be fighting over the bulbs. I put a computer in half the rooms and no one ever turns them on.*
>
> *All of my students have textbooks to take home and the teachers have the kits to use the textbooks. I'm not sure what else they can expect me to do.*
>
> *My science lead teacher has all this equipment locked up in a storage room. Whatever I buy them they find a way to hoard.*

The most telling response, perhaps, was that of BB, whose comments in other meetings and in her journal had often resonated with those of GG:

> *That stuff you're describing sounds nice, but what is important is that teachers interact appropriately with the children. They have the basic materials they need to do that and it's all I can do to make sure they're not using the old books and [lesson] plans that go with the old books...All this extra stuff would distract them from really teaching...*

GG was the only principal among the original twelve in the study group who had worked in another school district. As a consequence her expectations about instruction differed somewhat from those of the other principals. During the course of the study, GG applied for and received a significant grant that will enable her to provide in every classroom the kinds of resources she included in her description of Pittsburgh schools. Again, the responses of the group members to an announcement regarding GG's success in procuring the grant were telling:

> *Good luck getting Maintenance to load all that stuff in and help you get it up to the classrooms.*
>
> *Can you replace stuff when the students and teachers destroy it?*
>
> *Watch people when they transfer out...they'll try to take everything with them.*

Intriguing in these comments is the sense that the principals viewed additional classroom resources as simply additional challenges to manage, rather than as enhancements to the instructional program. Their professional tenure in the School District of Philadelphia had perhaps influenced their understandings of instruction such that they viewed as unnecessary the acquisition of instructional resources that other districts such as Pittsburgh would consider essential. In other words, the principals felt empowered to provide only the limited kinds of instructional resources they believed were necessary within their school communities. They believed that they were effective leaders who provided teachers with the tools necessary to do their work well.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Although the principals felt empowered in the management of financial resources, they voiced universal helplessness in the management of human resources, decrying their perceived lack of control in hiring certified teachers, finding substitute teachers to replace absent staff, or influencing the attendance of teachers, whose cumulative absences would lower the school's Performance Index rating. While they expressed the belief that they could provide adequate materials for instruction and behaved accordingly, they expressed anger at their lack of influence in managing the District's teacher hiring processes. This finding suggests that the principals believe that good teachers are important, while books, materials, and programs are less so. Under the contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the recruitment, hiring, and assignment of teachers are tasks managed centrally by the Office of Human Resources. The District utilizes a testing system through which new applicants are screened in written and performance examinations, then rank-ordered on a list of eligible candidates called to select a school as vacancies occur. Further, under the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers contract, transfers between schools were governed more by teachers than principals. As long as a teacher possessed sufficiently high seniority, and was certified to teach a class or grade level, he or she

could request a transfer to a school with a posted opening for that area of certification, regardless of whether he or she had taught it in the past. One principal complained, "Teachers have got it down to a science. You can call downtown, tell them your appointment date [starting date as an appointed teacher in the District], and they can tell you what date and time your transfer will go through."[35]

The power of the teachers' union to control the transfer and selection processes was not a new feature of the contract or of *Children Achieving*. Indeed, none of the group members could recall a time in Philadelphia when principals managed teacher selection. Interestingly, in contrast to their attitudes toward teaching resources described previously, this lack of power upset them. Although they had learned their roles within the culture of the School District of Philadelphia, and therefore had no prior personal experience with teacher selection, they regarded this lack of authority as extremely detrimental to their success as instructional leaders. While they had become acculturated to limited classroom resources, they had not become acculturated to limitations in the selection of teachers.

In the area of instructional resources, the principals believed that they were able to meet the enduring expectations of the culture of the School District of Philadelphia in providing appropriate materials. From the principals' perspective, the changing expectations of the District regarding instructional resources under *Children Achieving* required only more careful test preparation that they felt they were providing effectively. In the management of human resources, however, the principals perceived that, under *Children Achieving*, they were being held accountable for decisions which they were not able to influence. In addition to their sense of powerless around transfer decisions, principals felt vulnerable at their lack of control over the teacher attendance component of the Performance Index, in which each school is held accountable for teacher absence, regardless of causes of such absence:

> *My students will do fine on the SAT-9. But my Index is going to suffer because I have two teachers out with hysterectomies, one with breast cancer, and one on disability over carrying a box from her car. So I'm carrying four daily absences, plus the other teachers who get sick. If they're going to transfer all the middle-aged teachers my way, they can't punish me when their old equipment breaks down...*
>
> *You might have the old ones, but I got the young ones. There must be something in the water at my school. I must have six pregnancies a year. And this year I have daddies that want that Family Leave to stay home with new babies. And all of that childbirth stuff shows in my Index.*

Certainly, without measuring teacher absence in Philadelphia, which the District maintained was substantially higher than in other larger urban centers, there could be

[35] LL, November, 1999.

no way to influence progress in that area. But penalizing principals for matters so entirely out of their control perhaps encouraged an unsympathetic stance toward teachers with legitimate reasons for absence — creating an adversarial tone that ultimately undermines the principal's ability to unify teachers behind shared goals for schoolwide improvement.

A more general and pervasive concern was the availability of quality, certified teachers. Principals complained vehemently, not only about their lack of authority to select staff, but also about the quality of the teachers from whom they could select. The principals stated unanimously that the quality of the teacher pool recruited to the School District of Philadelphia had been diminishing for some time. Further, the principals voiced anger at the perceived disconnect between the quality of the available teaching staff and the expectations of the District regarding principals' work as instructional leaders:

> *I'm getting teachers who can't write a lesson plan and have major problems with classroom management. I rely on Human Resources to screen these people through the testing process, but I'm surprised at what I get walking in the door. And these are the certified teachers, not even talking about the apprentices. Naturally, students from these classes might not do as well on the SAT-9.*

> *Last spring I had two student teachers from St. Joe's, dynamite kids, one in special ed and one in fifth grade. I wanted them to teach for me when they graduated, but one got a job in Council Rock making $50,000 a year and the other went to Rosetree-Media starting at some salary that it would take her six years to reach in Philly. We get whoever absolutely can't get a job somewhere else and I get the last to go after that. I have some fine teachers in my school, but they are definitely the exception and the new ones coming in are never going to get there. The scary thing for me about the Performance Index is the technology that disaggregates the data. I can see which of my teachers' students did well on the test, but I can't change the teachers whose students did not do well. The data is useless to me because I already know what it says. I get lots of apprentice teachers. Every once in while one has some instincts, but most of mine are older people looking for a second career. I have this one guy with a degree in criminal justice who just throws the union in my face. He can't teach kids to sit in their seats, much less any science...I have this other woman with a degree in ancient history or something, also teaching science. Actually, I only have one certified teacher teaching science and she's not so hot herself. And of course my science scores are in the basement like everyone else's.*

> *I can't help where my school is. No matter what I do, I can't keep a staff in here. I'm lucky if I have a breathing body for every classroom, and the ones I end up with are the very bottom of the barrel. I'm not only in a bad part of the city, I'm in a school with a bad reputation in a bad part of the city...When I mention staffing they tell me I'm whining again.*

Although most of the principals had always worked within the School District of Philadelphia, and therefore were aware of the District's difficulties in recruiting talented teaching staff, they bridled at *Children Achieving*'s expectation that they could influence their schools' Performance Index scores absent talented staff. It was not just the shortage of staff that frustrated them, but rather their perception of increased professional accountability for improvement, regardless of this shortage. Further, the principals expressed frustration that the accountability was theirs alone:

> *It doesn't matter that Human Resources can't get its act together to have my teachers here on time. It doesn't matter that they send people to the wrong buildings. It doesn't matter that they give out misinformation if they return your call at all. I'm gonna pay for all of that. They don't ever have to pay.*

> *My cluster is like a big stone around my neck in getting teachers. If we got three schools in the Support Process, mostly because we got no good teachers, shouldn't somebody sit up and notice that? Everyone's protected but us.*

Asked whether they worked to recruit their own staffs, all stated that they limited their recruitment activities to attempting to encourage the return of student teachers assigned to their buildings by universities across the city. This activity was not without its horror stories about hiring practices gone awry. One principal described his effort to recruit a University of Pennsylvania student:

> *So this girl was good, tough. And she didn't care about the money. I mean, she really thought she could do some good teaching in the city, and she was already living here because she was at Penn. So she got the application stuff and all the clearances and sent everything in early, like February, didn't hear anything, didn't hear anything. So now it's like April and she's getting ready to graduate and she has to have a job. So she starts calling and can't get a call back. So she sends applications to Chester and Lancaster and some cities in Jersey. She's getting calls for interviews and nothing from Philly. So then she finally gets a notice to take the written part of the Philly test. She does, but she doesn't get a score. So now it's like May. Then she gets a letter, I think May 18, to be at the District on May 17 to do the Performance Test. She calls, and they let her reschedule so she goes and does her little lesson and then doesn't hear anything. So she took a job in Jersey somewhere. She got a letter telling her come to choose a school in Philly like the third week in August. She couldn't wait...*

This example of the challenges of the Philadelphia hiring process was affirmed by the other principals, each of whom recounted examples of "losing decent people to some other district's superior organization."[36]

[36] BB, December, 1999.

As in the provision of professional development, the principals had become passive in the recruitment of staff for their schools, even though they recognized such recruitment was useful to them as instructional leaders. "I know what I could do with better teachers, but I can't get them through the process to get them in here. I used to stay in touch with some college people and let them know when I had openings, but I could never find anyone with enough stamina to end up here."[37] Through such experiences with failed attempts to recruit staff, the principals in the study may have learned that their efforts did not yield results of value to them. Once again, they remained passive in the face of new opportunities — a manifestation perhaps of learned helplessness similar to their lack of initiative regarding professional development.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS

The *Children Achieving* plan for change, while devoting little attention to the significance of the changing role of Philadelphia's 260 principals, provided two important structural changes to support school decision-making. The first of these innovations was the cluster structure, an effort to reorganize the District into smaller, more responsive communities of schools sharing responsibility for educating a core of learners from enrollment through graduation. Each of the 22 cluster offices typically included 12 staff, composed of coordinators from the Teaching and Learning Network, the Family Resource Network, the Office of Equity Support, and the Office of Education for Employment. The idea was that these representatives of central offices would be located within easy reach of principals, rather than in some distant, central location. The second innovation was the establishment in schools of small learning communities, or schools-within-schools, consisting of 200 or 300 students. Each grouping was rostered together with teams of teachers who focused their education around particular instructional themes. The small learning communities, like the clusters, were meant in part to personalize the schooling experience, particularly in large school settings, enabling teachers to work together both to know students well and to teach them more collaboratively and effectively.

In describing new standards of performance and new levels of accountability under *Children Achieving*, the majority of the principals in the study group failed to recognize the support intended by the District in these new structural reforms. Not surprisingly, they described these innovations in terms of the culture which existed prior to the *Children Achieving* plan, comparing cluster offices to the former regional or district offices and small learning communities to "houses," "academies," or other pre-existing administrative structures. Rather than viewing clusters as an entirely new model for devolving instructional leadership to the school level and affirming that cluster coordinators supported them in their work, two principals noted that cluster support staff impeded their performance:

[37] HH, December 1999.

My cluster is like the old region only smaller. I got to answer to everybody in the office, the Resource Development Network, the Family Resource Network, Special Ed., Equity, Administrative Assistants. They got as many chiefs as they did before, but not as many Indians [fewer schools]. I liked it when there were more of us Indians.

The clusters bound the expertise. I'm not allowed to go outside of my cluster. We have some good people but the limitations are there. It feels a lot like "divide and conquer" like we talked about last spring.

These sentiments were not universal, however. One principal described a positive relationship with her cluster leader and noted that she found her cluster "supportive, with experts from different offices who conduct school visits and help me with resources."

Despite their disparate experiences within the various clusters, the principals concurred that the mission and role of the cluster offices had been loosely defined. When polled about the differences between regions and clusters, five of the seven participating principals noted that the only difference between the cluster and the region was size. (There were at one time as many as eight regional offices, employing about 22-26 staff.) Two of the seven principals, BB and GG, made note of the fact that clusters were intended to foster the new organizational goal of "articulated instruction from kindergarten through twelfth grade" (GG) or "coordinated school experiences for students in each part of the city" (BB). When asked, however, whether the clusters actually served to support articulated instruction, BB and GG joined the other group members in asserting that their own cluster office did not:

GG: I don't even know what happens to my kids after they leave me.

BB: We don't ever talk about what's the same or different across schools.

JJ: No one talks in our cluster meetings. We get the information and get back to school as quick as we can.

DD: In my cluster each school is expected to do its own thing.

The principals equated the new cluster structure with their cultural reference point — the region. They expended little emotion in this connection and seemed complaisant about their roles within the cluster. None expected to participate actively in the development of the cluster's philosophy or practices, nor expressed dismay or anger at their lack of voice in this discussion. All but BB and GG perceived the clusters as merely new administrative units of organization that neither inhibited nor promoted their work. To them, the clusters represented not an innovation in structure, but rather a reworking of the previous division of the District into administrative regions.

The principals were not as complaisant, however, about small learning communities, which, for many, represented a mandated affront to their authority to structure their schools in ways that were familiar to them:

> *Probably the strongest thing I had going in my building was the grade levels. Teachers in each grade level met monthly or more to talk over what everyone was teaching across the school. There was a lot of coordination and sharing of resources. Then this SLC stuff came down and suddenly they're split up into SLC's...broke up most of the communication.*

> *I didn't have SLCs but I had department heads who kept everyone together, and I had teachers who came to me and said, 'Make sure these kids get this teacher next year.' We didn't have BS little themes like "Technology Corner" and "Arts Alive." We just had school. My people who used to work so well together are now spread out.*

Asked how they took advantage of the small learning community structure to facilitate instructional improvement, the majority of the principals seemed baffled. All spoke of their efforts to provide common planning time for teachers within communities, all mentioned implementation of the Comprehensive Student Support Process (to support challenged and challenging learners), all described release time for small learning community coordinators "to take care of discipline" (HH), but most viewed SLC meeting time as an end in itself with no clear purpose.

While each of the principals could name the small learning communities in their school — instructionally themed at the middle school level and divided into younger and older learners in the elementary schools — none could describe any teaching differences among the communities. In other words, while one community may be entitled "Arts Alive," its instructional resources and emphases were the same as those of "Technology Corner." Two of the principals, BB and GG, acknowledged that, ideally, small learning community planning time should be utilized to work toward instructional decisions, but noted these "realities" (GG):

> *I can't get subs. When my teachers are out they have to cover for each other. So my teachers have common planning time a couple of times a week, but they're never all available to meet since they're off covering classes.*

> *The Comprehensive Support Process eats up all the time. My teachers are too busy filling out forms and talking about problem kids to get to teaching and learning.*

For the principals in the study group, the small learning communities represented not instructional units, but administrative ones. Importantly, these administrative units were mandated — another perceived affront to principal authority within the espoused theory of site-based management — and because they were

generally not understood as serving instructional purposes they were typically not utilized in the ways envisioned by the District. In one instance, they limited a principal's vision of how to restructure her school for teaching and learning:

> *I would rather have smaller grade level teams, like middle school models, so teachers could get to know their students better. But the cluster says vertical, and so I have vertical.*[38]

FINDINGS REVISITED

The 12 principals in the study group seemed to view instructional leadership as a broad range of activities unrelated to clearly articulated strategies for teaching and learning. Only one of the principals referenced work with teachers in classrooms as a component of instructional leadership, yet all proved eager to characterize themselves as instructional leaders. Closely related to this finding are the principals' assertions that they managed sufficient financial resources to provide effective instructional programs and materials in their schools. Within their understanding of the *Children Achieving* reforms, their responsibility as instructional leaders was to provide adequate test preparation materials to manipulate their school's achievement on the District's Performance Index. All but one of the principals felt empowered to meet this professional expectation.

While all of the principals maintained that teacher professional development was necessary to meet the heightened expectations of the Performance Index, none embraced responsibility for providing or monitoring the effectiveness of such professional development. Several described their efforts to engage teachers in activities which would strengthen instructional skills, but concluded that the District impeded these efforts, creating structures and responding to principals' efforts in ways which disempowered principals. The principals came to believe that, despite District rhetoric around site-based management, responsibility for professional development was best left to people outside of the school, to entities such as the Teaching and Learning Network and the Urban Systemic Initiative. Because professional development was not perceived to be job-embedded in teaching, but rather constituted additional and separate work best left to others to manage, the principals came to accept no responsibility for providing innovative opportunities for their teachers, or for evaluating the work of the TLN and USI in improving instruction in their schools.

The principals voiced universal dismay at their perceived inability to recruit or maintain quality teachers in their schools. Their anger resulted not from the cultural tradition of teacher selection, which, as a result of the contract with the teacher union, was prescribed and managed centrally. Rather, the principals resented increased accountability for teacher attendance and performance in the absence of

[38] GG, May 1999.

opportunities to manage teacher selection. The principals believed that they were held accountable through the Performance Index for the work of central offices that were not themselves held accountable. They described events through which they had learned to behave passively in the area of teacher recruitment. Unlike the provision of professional development, however, in which the majority of the principals were content to accept others' responsibility, the principals were universally frustrated at their inability to build staffs that they perceived would help them to show success on the Performance Index. They viewed quality teachers, and not professional development, as directly related to school accountability.

The principals in the study did not recognize clusters or small learning communities as structures to support them in reaching the expectations inherent in the Performance Index. They viewed the clusters as smaller regions, administrative units like those they had known prior to *Children Achieving*. They viewed small learning communities within schools as mandated organizational structures that impeded their ability to organize their schools as autonomous leaders under site-based management. Their inability or unwillingness to accept these structures affirms the potency of District culture in shaping principal understanding and suggests that the principals were not given ample opportunity to discuss the purposes and potential of these reforms.

Finally, the 12 principals in the study group were unwilling to participate in a research project through which they could collect data in their schools useful to the District in its planning. This finding suggests three possibilities: (1) that the principals did not believe that District officials would value their work, (2) that they did not feel themselves competent to engage in such work, and (3), that they did not see the importance or potential of such work in shaping their roles as school leaders. Each of these possibilities is important in understanding the ways in which the principals chose to define their roles as instructional leaders in a District committed to public, school-by-school improvement in student performance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE

The study group of principals chose, in many situations, to behave passively as instructional leaders within *Children Achieving*'s plan for change. This passivity could indicate a lack of understanding or capacity, as Elmore[39] suggests, or resistance, as many researchers have claimed, or a form of learned helplessness in which they have been discouraged to take risks as leaders. The first and third possibilities suggest, perhaps, complementary theories through which the work of principals can be expanded to meet the needs of a new culture of accountability. If principals lack deep understanding of instruction and yet are called upon to facilitate decisions and resources to support teaching and learning, as this report suggests, then any reform effort which does not prioritize professional development for principals will meet with limited success.

Nowhere in the rhetoric or design of *Children Achieving* is the essential role of the principal as site-based instructional leader defined or developed. In the absence of clear language about the significance of their role, the principals have been left to make sense of new structures and instructional imperatives based on their cultural experiences within a District that had functioned quite differently than the one conceived in the *Children Achieving* plan. In many cases, such as teacher professional development and recruitment of staff, they acknowledge that their efforts have not been effective. Principals must be deeply engaged in the design and implementation of plans for change through comprehensive professional development that mirrors the kinds of experiences deemed most appropriate for teacher learning. Efforts to "reprofessionalize" teaching[40] by strengthening teacher voice and skill through school councils and the Teaching and Learning Network may have unintentionally served to disempower principals. Nowhere in the *Children Achieving* design were principals permitted to influence the evolution of the clusters or of other structures and processes directly affecting their work as school leaders. Instead, under *Children Achieving*, principals are expected to "implement" the decisions of local school councils — perhaps not an altogether different leadership task than implementing the policies of a central administration.

Despite its lack of attention to its original purpose, the study group experience described in this report may hold promise for principal professional development. Although the principals were neither compensated nor acknowledged in any manner for their participation in this project, none missed a group meeting and all participated fully. The study group provided an unusual opportunity for principals to share their perspectives about their work, to learn how others approached this work, and to talk openly and constructively about impediments to the work. The study group permitted principals both to explore new expectations and to share the ways in which the District

[39] Elmore, *Building a new structure for school leadership.*

[40] Sykes, "Fostering teacher professionalism in schools."

encouraged or impeded their application of the new knowledge, potentially building their capacity and the capacity of those in the cluster and District to understand impediments to change. As a component of a comprehensive plan for change rather than a covert undertaking in which the principals would not engage without assurances of anonymity, the study group could prove a potent form of professional development.

Not engaging principals in official ways in discussions and design of *Children Achieving* proved especially significant for the principals in the study group. Those who felt disempowered, including all designated "superior" by District officials at the beginning of the study, have chosen to leave the District. As of this writing, only four of the original twelve participants remain as principals in the School District of Philadelphia, including all three designated "ineffective" among the sample. Six are serving as principals in other school districts, one has retired, and one has been promoted to another position within the District. Two of the most assertive principals, BB and GG, both eager to embrace the challenges of excellence, left Philadelphia in the summer of 2000. Their reasons for leaving reflect their refusal to be made to behave passively:

> *I can't be the principal I'm capable of becoming in a place that only lets a handful of people really lead. I can't grow in the place they see for me. I'm not just an implementer of other people's ideas. If I stick around much longer that's all that will be left for me. Much longer and I'll develop the Philly attitude that if I hold firm I can just weather the changes and do nothing new.*

> *Leaving here tears me up. I've worked to be the kind of school that kids want to come to, the kind of place I'd send my own children to. I never thought I'd leave. I was a lifer. But they won't let me do the work. They keep telling me what to do and not listening to me when I tell them what my children need. They don't trust me to lead. I didn't sign on to be the whipping girl. I'm a leader and I'm going where people will let me do that.*

The principals in the study group often recognized that they were not meeting the expectations of *Children Achieving*, but many were unwilling to be held accountable for work which they did not know how to perform or were not, in their estimation, permitted to perform. Many have sought leadership challenges elsewhere, hoping to "act again and be treated as a leader."[41]

[41] CC, July 1999.

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